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UNCLAS DJIBOUTI 001278

SIPDIS

LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

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TAGS: PREL PGOV DJ

SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI PASSES NEW LEGISLATION ON CITIZENSHIP

¶11. (U) Summary: On 26 September the Permanent Commission of the Djiboutian National Assembly adopted a new law regarding qualifications for Djiboutian citizenship. The new law is more liberal than the current requirements and will give greater rights to pass on citizenship to Djiboutian women. End Summary.

¶12. (U) Currently, the law states that a person must show proof of both the mother and father having citizenship in order to be eligible for Djiboutian nationality. The legislation adopted on 26 September will change the requirement to show proof of either the mother or the father's Djiboutian citizenship. Due to the nature of the bookkeeping at the Population Services and the historically nomadic nature of the Djiboutian population, many cases depend on the applicant being "well-known" by the case workers, or the district commissioners in the instance of those outside Djibouti city.

¶13. (U) Only the Service de Population (Population Service) within the Ministry of Interior has the responsibility and authority to issue national identity cards. The Service de Population has one office in the capital city. However, District Commissioners are also given authority to process cases and submit them to the main bureau in the capital. This, and the lack of funds, personnel and training, has led to there being a reported back-log of applications that number nearly 6,000.

¶14. (U) Identity cards cost the applicant 2,000 DF (roughly 11 USD) for the initial application. Replacements are much more expensive at 10,000 DF (56 USD). The cost of even the initial application is prohibitive for the average Djiboutian family, whose average GDP per capita is measured at only 1,200 USD annually. (Note: This figure does not take into account the over 50 percent unemployment rate. End Note.) Many families choose to use their money to purchase food for their children rather than apply for a national ID.

¶15. (U) The lack of a National Identity Card can make a Djiboutian's life very difficult. There are numerous tasks that one cannot accomplish without an identity card. Registering for school, getting a job, and collecting benefits are among many. Because many children do not have ID cards and cannot go to school without one, the Service de Population is starting to expedite processing applications in batches by year of birth - starting with the most recent decade. Occasional round-ups of illegal aliens can also be one situation where it is dangerous not to have a national identity card.

¶16. (U) Said Aboubaker Bosoma, Director of the Service de Population said in a conversation with PolOff on 18 August that the present system, though simple, does not work well and the service does have a large back-log. Bosoma said there is great need for their archives and processing system to be computerized in order to accelerate work. He also commented that the new law, which at the time had not been passed, would facilitate working through the caseload by making it easier to attain citizenship.

RAGSDALE